



**IMPLEMENTING RESPONSIBLE RESEARCH ASSESSMENT
AT RESEARCH FUNDING ORGANIZATIONS:**

INFORMATIONAL BRIEF ON THE LANDSCAPE

This brief provides an overview of responsible research assessment: what it is, why it matters, and its relationship to wider initiatives that aim to improve research culture and maximize the impact of research. It draws upon DORA's "A Practical Guide to Implementing Responsible Research Assessment at Research Funding Organizations".



[DOWNLOAD THE FULL GUIDE FOR FREE! ↗](#)

Download "A Practical Guide to Implementing Responsible Research Assessment at Research Funding Organizations".



IN COLLABORATION WITH







Responsible research assessment and why it matters

Research and researchers are assessed in many ways across the research system and at different points in the research cycle, from funding decisions and grant review, to hiring, promotion and tenure, and national assessments that inform research funding and policy. Conventional approaches to assessing research and researchers have often relied on a narrow set of metrics, such as publication counts and citations, to inform decisions. While useful in some contexts, these provide only a partial view of performance and do not capture the full quality, breadth, and impact of scholarly work^{1,2}.

Responsible research assessment (RRA) responds to this by offering an approach built on three core principles: taking a holistic view of contributions and impact; valuing quality over quantity through broader, more balanced indicators; and promoting equity². Evidence shows that RRA-aligned approaches can improve the quality, efficiency, and impact of funded research by strengthening reliability, reducing waste, and enabling faster, broader impact^{4,5}. RRA also offers a strategic opportunity to advance wider strategic priorities - such as research culture, open science, equity, integrity, infrastructure, and societal impact - helping ensure that policies, incentives, and investments across the funding lifecycle reinforce each other.

Building a research system underpinned by RRA

Around the world, funders, research organizations, policymakers, publishers, and scholarly communities are testing new ways to assess research quality, contribution, and impact in line with RRA principles.

Many funders are developing more holistic and inclusive research and researcher assessment criteria and processes in their decision-making. This includes adopting narrative CVs in application processes to allow researchers to share a broader range of their research and career achievements and impacts, providing training to grant reviewers and committees on how to avoid bias, and reducing the focus on publication-based metrics in the funding decision making^{6,7}. Funders are also incentivizing good research practices and stewardship by embedding them into grant conditions, for example, requiring data sharing, open access publishing, and other open science practices as part of funding.

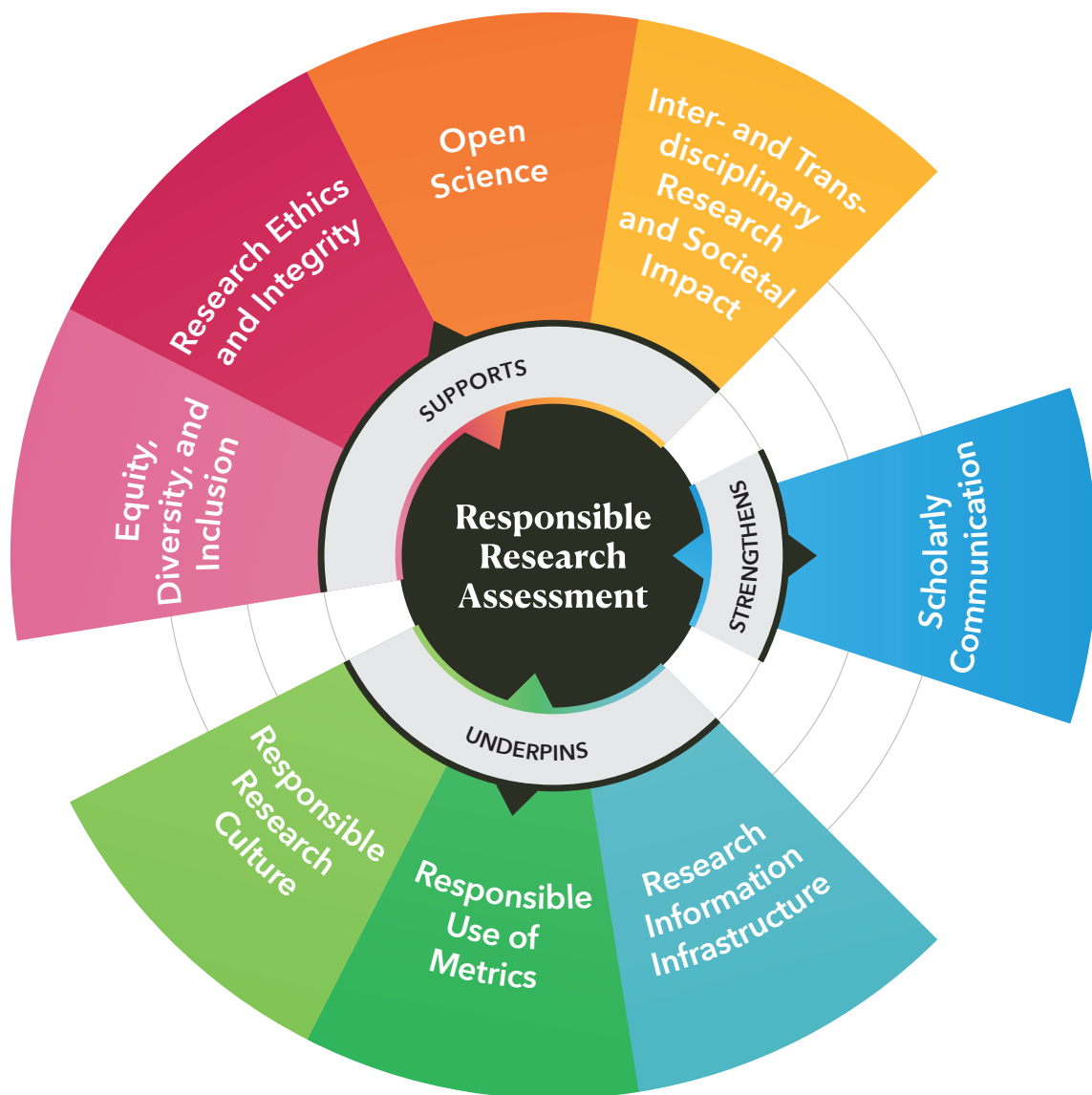
The wider research system is evolving in parallel. Research organizations are promoting broader definitions of contribution in career development. Publishers are enabling more open and transparent practices, such as the sharing of research data and code and open peer review, and many provide article-level metrics that better reflect the reach and influence of research. Many governments are revisiting the frameworks they use for national and institutional research assessment exercises. And metrics providers are developing indicators that better reflect societal impact.

International initiatives, such as DORA, FOLEC-CLACSO, CoARA, and the Global Research Council's RRA Working Group, provide an increasing range of practical tools, frameworks, and communities of practice to support RRA-aligned actions in different contexts.

RRA and its place in the research system

RRA is closely linked to the interdependent components of the research system, including research culture, open science, equity, integrity, infrastructure, and scholarly communication, all of which influence how research quality and impact are recognized. It acts as both a lever and an enabler, supporting progress across these areas, while also being shaped by them.

The infographic on the next page shows how RRA relates to core components of the research system that underpin, support, and strengthen it, and are, in turn, shaped and enabled by it. Below, we highlight how implementing RRA contributes to each core component.



1. **Responsible research culture** recognizes and incentivizes collaboration, integrity, and innovation.
2. **Responsible use of metrics** balances and broadens approach to research assessment.
3. **Research information infrastructure** makes contributions discoverable and usable.
4. **Equity, diversity, and inclusion** recognizes the diversity of contributions and career paths.
5. **Research ethics and integrity** reduces perverse incentives, focuses on practices that deliver robust research.
6. **Open science** rewards transparency and the sharing of data and research outputs.
7. **Inter- and transdisciplinary research and societal impact** values work that crosses boundaries and delivers real-world benefits.
8. **Scholarly communication** facilitates the sharing of research findings, maximizing the potential for use and reuse.

I work at a funder, what can I do?

Changing existing practices takes time, and there is no “one-size-fits-all” approach. What matters is to take steps that fit your organization’s goals and context. There are several practical ways to get started:

1 Make the Case

Build a clear internal case for RRA, why it matters and how it will benefit the organization. Secure leadership support early, and position RRA as an evolution that can benefit the whole organization.

2 Implement

Work with colleagues and the external community to identify the best and priority places across the funding life cycle to test out and implement new approaches. Plan for the resources needed to support RRA interventions early. Consider small pilot interventions before committing to larger-scale changes.

3 Improve

Monitor how new approaches are working, gather feedback from applicants and reviewers, and use evidence to refine practices over time.

4 Engage

Work with colleagues and the research community to co-design approaches, and to build trust and support for any planned changes.

5 Align

Connect with peer organizations and wider initiatives to learn from others, share ideas, reduce duplication, and develop consistent practices where this makes sense.

Resources and references

All online sources were accessed and correct as of March 2026.

1. Hicks, D., Wouters, P., Waltman, L., de Rijcke, S., & Rafols, I. (2015). Bibliometrics: The Leiden Manifesto for research metrics. *Nature*, 520 (7548), 429–431. <https://doi.org/10.1038/520429a>
2. DORA. (2024). DORA releases new guidance on research indicators. <https://sfdora.org/2024/05/06/dora-releases-new-guidance-on-research-indicators/>
3. CCurry, S., de Rijcke, S., Hatch, A., Pillay, D. (Gansen), van der Weijden, I., & Wilsdon, J. (2022). The changing role of funders in responsible research assessment: progress, obstacles and the way ahead (RoRI Working Paper No.3). Research on Research Institute. <https://doi.org/10.6084/M9.FIGSHARE.13227914.V2>
4. Ioannidis, J. P. A., Greenland, S., Hlatky, M. A., Khoury, M. J., Macleod, M. R., Moher, D., Schulz, K. F., & Tibshirani, R. (2014). Increasing value and reducing waste in research design, conduct, and analysis. *The Lancet*, 383(9912), 166–175. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0140-6736\(13\)62227-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0140-6736(13)62227-8)
5. UK Reproducibility Network Steering Committee (2021). From grassroots to global: A blueprint for building a reproducibility network. *PLOS Biology*, 19(11), e3001461. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pbio.3001461>
6. Fritch, R., Garrard, S., Hatch, A., Hazlett, H., Noone, H., Quinn, L., Strinzel, M., Thomson, A., & Vinkenburg, C. (2024). Using Narrative CVs: Identifying shared objectives and monitoring effectiveness (Version v1). Zenodo. <https://doi.org/10.5281/ZENODO.10845837>
7. Global Research Council. Responsible Research Assessment Working Group. Responsible Research Assessment Case Studies. <https://globalresearchcouncil.org/about/responsible-research-assessment-working-group/case-study-library/>





DORA works to advance practical and robust approaches to research and researcher assessment globally.


WANT TO KNOW MORE?


This brief is informed by “A Practical Guide to Implementing Responsible Research Assessment at Research Funding Organizations”, which offers guidance and tips for funders seeking to reform their assessment practices.





[DOWNLOAD THE FULL GUIDE FOR FREE! ↗](#)

CONNECT WITH US

 sfdora.org

 Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA)

 info@sfdora.org

 [@dorassessment.bsky.social](https://twitter.com/dorassessment)

IN COLLABORATION WITH



CITE AS

DORA San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment. (2026). Implementing Responsible Research Assessment at RFOs: Informational Briefs from the Practical Guide. DORA. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19615795>



**IMPLEMENTING RESPONSIBLE RESEARCH ASSESSMENT
AT RESEARCH FUNDING ORGANIZATIONS:**

INFORMATIONAL BRIEF FOR LEADERSHIP

This brief provides senior leaders at research funding organizations with a summary of the key considerations and potential actions in taking forward responsible research assessment practices. It draws upon DORA's "A Practical Guide to Implementing Responsible Research Assessment at Research Funding Organizations".



[DOWNLOAD THE FULL GUIDE FOR FREE! ↗](#)

Download "A Practical Guide to Implementing Responsible Research Assessment at Research Funding Organizations".



IN COLLABORATION WITH





The value of Responsible Research Assessment

Conventional approaches to assessing research and researchers, both in the grant application process and in post-award evaluation, have often relied on a narrow set of metrics, such as publication counts and citations, to inform decisions. While useful in some contexts, these metrics provide only a partial view of performance and do not capture the full quality, breadth, and impact of scholarly work^{1,2}. The criteria used in research assessment influences behaviors, how research is conducted, and the focus on specific outputs and outcomes in reporting; any limitations in the research assessment process therefore directly affects potential research impacts.

Responsible research assessment (RRA) responds to this by offering an approach built on three core principles: taking a holistic view of contributions and impact; valuing quality over quantity through broader, more balanced indicators; and promoting equity³.

Evidence shows that RRA-aligned approaches can improve the quality, efficiency, and impact of funded research by strengthening reliability, reducing waste, and enabling faster, broader impact^{4,5}. RRA also offers the opportunity to advance wider strategic priorities - such as research culture, open science, equity, integrity, infrastructure, and societal impact - helping ensure that policies, incentives, and investments across the funding lifecycle reinforce each other.

How to implement RRA approaches

Implementing RRA requires coordinated action across a range of activities. Depending on specific funder priorities and context, this could include conducting a landscape review of current assessment practices, learning from peers, talking to the research community, developing pilots, and mobilizing resources to support action.

There are several places within the funding lifecycle where RRA practices can be tested and embedded. For example:

- 1. Establishing funding programs and calls:** Design funding calls that attract the pool of high-quality applicants that are needed to achieve your funding goals. Establish eligibility criteria that do not inadvertently narrow the applicant pool. Create application forms that provide space for applicants to share the diversity of their experience and achievements.
- 2. Making funding decisions:** Create fair, transparent, and consistent review processes. Recruit diverse funding committees and equip reviewers with clear guidance and training. Build in calibration discussions to support consistent scoring and decision making across reviewers and panels.
- 3. Setting grant terms and conditions:** Design flexible, proportionate T&Cs that clearly articulate expectations for researcher behavior and good research practice. Reduce administrative burden by reusing existing information where possible.
- 4. Monitoring and evaluating grants and programs:** RRA-aligned monitoring and evaluation is proportionate, focuses on what matters and promotes shared learnings. In grant reporting, only capture information that is needed and avoid overburdening grantees. Be transparent about how information captured during grant reporting and evaluation processes will be used.
- 5. Communicating and engaging with your communities:** Make time to explain both internally and to external audiences what RRA means in practice for the organization. Talk about the diversity of what and who you have funded. Take a balanced and broad approach when talking about success and impact, showcasing the value and relevance of the different kinds of research.

Resources and references

All online sources were accessed and correct as of March 2026.

1. Hicks, D., Wouters, P., Waltman, L., de Rijcke, S., & Rafols, I. (2015). Bibliometrics: The Leiden Manifesto for research metrics. *Nature*, 520 (7548), 429–431. <https://doi.org/10.1038/520429a>
2. Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA). (2024). Guidance on the responsible use of quantitative indicators in research assessment. DORA. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.13844873>
3. Curry, S., de Rijcke, S., Hatch, A., Pillay, D. (Gansen), van der Weijden, I., & Wilsdon, J. (2022). The changing role of funders in responsible research assessment: progress, obstacles and the way ahead (RoRI Working Paper No.3). Research on Research Institute. <https://doi.org/10.6084/M9.FIGSHARE.13227914.V2>
4. Ioannidis, J. P. A., Greenland, S., Hlatky, M. A., Khoury, M. J., Macleod, M. R., Moher, D., Schulz, K. F., & Tibshirani, R. (2014). Increasing value and reducing waste in research design, conduct, and analysis. *The Lancet*, 383(9912), 166–175. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0140-6736\(13\)62227-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0140-6736(13)62227-8)
5. UK Reproducibility Network Steering Committee (2021). From grassroots to global: A blueprint for building a reproducibility network. *PLOS Biology*, 19(11), e3001461. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pbio.3001461>



DORA

DORA works to advance practical and robust approaches to research and researcher assessment globally.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

This brief is informed by “A Practical Guide to Implementing Responsible Research Assessment at Research Funding Organizations”, which offers guidance and tips for funders seeking to reform their assessment practices.



[DOWNLOAD THE FULL GUIDE FOR FREE! ↗](#)

CONNECT WITH US



sfdora.org



info@sfdora.org



[Declaration on Research Assessment \(DORA\)](#)



[@dorassessment.bsky.social](#)

IN COLLABORATION WITH



**SCIENCE
EUROPE**
Shaping the future of research



CITE AS

DORA San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment. (2026). Implementing Responsible Research Assessment at RFOs: Informational Briefs from the Practical Guide. DORA. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19615795>



IMPLEMENTING RESPONSIBLE RESEARCH ASSESSMENT
AT RESEARCH FUNDING ORGANIZATIONS:

INFORMATIONAL BRIEF FOR FUNDING PROGRAM TEAMS

This brief provides funding program staff with a summary of the key considerations and potential actions to support the development and implementation of responsible research assessment practices. It draws upon DORA's "A Practical Guide to Implementing Responsible Research Assessment at Research Funding Organizations".



[DOWNLOAD THE FULL GUIDE FOR FREE! ↗](#)

Download "A Practical Guide to Implementing Responsible Research Assessment at Research Funding Organizations".



IN COLLABORATION WITH







The value of Responsible Research Assessment

Traditional approaches to assessing research and researchers, both in the grant application process and in post-award evaluation, have often relied on a narrow set of metrics, such as publication counts and citations, to inform decisions. While useful in some contexts, such metrics provide only a partial view of performance and do not capture the full quality, breadth, and impact of scholarly work^{1,2}.

Responsible research assessment (RRA) responds to this by offering an approach built on three core principles: taking a holistic view of contributions and impact; valuing quality over quantity through broader, more balanced indicators; and promoting equity³.

Evidence shows that RRA-aligned approaches can improve the quality, efficiency, and impact of funded research by strengthening reliability through robust and transparent practices, reducing waste through better sharing and recognition of all results, and enabling faster, broader impact through collaboration and openness^{4,5}.



RESOURCE

GRC RRA
[SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL](#) ↗

Use the tool to assess organizational readiness and opportunities for RRA⁶.



WHERE TO START?


How to shape an approach to RRA

Research assessment practices are directly influenced by how funding programs are designed and run. Program staff play a key role in putting RRA into practice. This often requires collaboration across teams and engagement with the communities of reviewers and researchers they support.

There are a range of activities that can enable and inform the development of RRA, notably:


1 Engaging the organization leadership


- Make the case for RRA clearly explaining the benefits of RRA and risks of not aligning
- Anticipate resistance and prepare convincing responses to challenges



IDEAS FOR ACTION ↗

Discover DORA's factsheet with common myths and constructive responses about the need for research assessment reform⁷.





RETHINKING RESEARCH ASSESSMENT IDEAS FOR ACTION

5 COMMON MYTHS ABOUT EVALUATION

Accessing research and researchers, especially in research-intensive institutions, frequently relies on indicators like Journal Impact Factor (JIF) and similar measures as proxies for quality in research, promotion, and tenure (PPT) decisions. But a closer examination indicates that the perceived value of JIF is often grounded in false assumptions.

- Myth 1:** Hiring, promotion, and tenure decisions are largely made on "merit."
Large volumes of applications for faculty searches make it difficult for evaluators to distinguish between top-tier candidates, and unexamined biases—like the halo effect, availability, and confirmation bias—influence decision-making.
- Myth 2:** Quality research is easy to recognize and rises to the top.
Novel research, including breakthrough "subliminal warning" work, often becomes influential (and cited) outside of the JIF measurement window, and findings with significant societal impact are not always published in journals with a high JIF.
- Myth 3:** JIF and other similar journal-based indicators measure research quality.
JIFs are intended to reflect overall journal measures, and do not provide reliable or scientifically sound information about individual articles or researchers.
Many percent of research-intensive institutions in North America measure JIF in PPT documents, but interpret it inconsistently to mean quality, importance, or prestige⁶.
- Myth 4:** Researchers mostly care about journal reputation.
Faculty members claim to prioritize peer recognition when publishing, yet the perception that their peers value prestige and a reliance on university rankings puts pressure on researchers to publish their work in high-impact factor journals⁶.
- Myth 5:** Assessment practices will naturally improve over time.
"Invisible work" like service is typically not valued in RRA, yet disproportionately fills on resumes and other channels (historically excluded from research).
Based on a sample of research practices in faculty handbooks, faculty diversity will not significantly increase until 2030 without active intervention⁸.

5 DESIGN PRINCIPLES

- 1. Establish standards and structure into research assessment processes.**
This might look like:
Task like narrative CVs and assessment matrices "provide standards to increase consistency in decision-making."
Discussions amongst evaluators can be used to define expectations and identify decision questions before any assessment takes place.
- 2. Foster a sense of personal accountability in faculty and staff.**
This might look like:
The University of Cambridge established a working group "to develop and implement an action plan for responsible research assessment."
The University of Oxford hosted a series of "open hubs" to collect feedback before revising their practice.
Make it explicit that it's everyone's responsibility to "stop the flow" in the face of inequitable bias at the beginning of every decision-making situation.

2 Developing a strategic vision for RRA

- Link RRA with your organization's mission and values
- Articulate the goals of RRA and how it will benefit the organization



GRC DIMENSIONS OF RESPONSIBLE RESEARCH ASSESSMENT ↗

Explore the GRC's 11 dimensions that provide a shared framework for advancing RRA⁸.





3 Exploring the landscape for RRA

- Understand current internal practices of assessing researchers and research
- Find out what peer organizations (and national and international initiatives) are doing to enhance research assessment

4 Working with communities inside and outside the organization

- Engage staff across teams who are working on RRA-related activities
- Make opportunities for peers and experts outside your organization to contribute

5 Mobilizing resources for RRA

- Plan for the resources needed to support RRA interventions early
- Consider small pilot interventions before committing to larger-scale changes

6 Creating strong engagement and communication plans

- Involve communications experts to make sure messaging around RRA is clear and consistent
- Include concrete examples in messaging on RRA to show how it works in practice

7 Monitoring, evaluating and reviewing activities and interventions

- Track and evaluate the effectiveness of new or amended approaches
- Share analyses of what works and what doesn't both internally and externally, even if results are mixed

How to implement RRA approaches

Changing existing practices takes time, and there is no “one-size-fits-all” approach. What matters is taking a first step that fits your organization’s goals and context.

Fortunately, there are several points in the typical funding cycle for potential RRA-aligned interventions.

- 1. Establishing funding programs and calls:** Design calls that are aligned with your organizational values, are inclusive, and accessible. Ensure funding options are relevant, attractive, and competitive by engaging potential applicants. Advertise calls in ways that reach the intended recipients and beneficiaries effectively. Establish eligibility criteria that do not inadvertently exclude desired applicants or narrow the pool. Create application forms that provide space for applicants to share the diversity of their experience and achievements.

Include guidance around your expectations in terms of researcher behaviors, reporting of progress, and what you consider to be good research practice. Aim to build a partnership with your grantees that supports them to succeed.
- 2. Making funding decisions:** Create fair, transparent, and consistent review processes. Recruit diverse funding committees and provide reviewers with clear guidance and training to ensure they make robust, high-quality, and credible decisions about what to fund.
- 3. Setting grant terms and conditions:** Grant terms and conditions (T&Cs) are an easy way to put RRA into practice. Design T&Cs to be flexible, proportionate, and to be more than a compliance document.
- 4. Monitoring and evaluating grants and programs:** RRA-aligned monitoring and evaluation is proportionate, focuses on what matters and promotes shared learnings. In grant reporting processes, only capture information that is needed and avoid overburdening grantees. Be transparent about how information will be used.
- 5. Communicating and engaging with your communities:** Make time to explain both internally and to external audiences what RRA means in practice for the organization. Talk about the diversity of grants and grantees that you have funded, to provide examples and role models for others. Take a balanced approach to describe funding successes and impact, showing the value and relevance of a diversity of research.

Resources and references

All online sources were accessed and correct as of March 2026.

1. Hicks, D., Wouters, P., Waltman, L., de Rijcke, S., & Rafols, I. (2015). Bibliometrics: The Leiden Manifesto for research metrics. *Nature*, 520 (7548), 429–431. <https://doi.org/10.1038/520429a>
2. DORA. (2024). DORA releases new guidance on research indicators. <https://sfdora.org/2024/05/06/dora-releases-new-guidance-on-research-indicators/>
3. Curry, S., de Rijcke, S., Hatch, A., Pillay, D. (Gansen), van der Weijden, I., & Wilsdon, J. (2022). The changing role of funders in responsible research assessment: progress, obstacles and the way ahead (RoRI Working Paper No.3). Research on Research Institute. <https://doi.org/10.6084/M9.FIGSHARE.13227914.V2>
4. Ioannidis, J. P. A., Greenland, S., Hlatky, M. A., Khoury, M. J., Macleod, M. R., Moher, D., Schulz, K. F., & Tibshirani, R. (2014). Increasing value and reducing waste in research design, conduct, and analysis. *The Lancet*, 383(9912), 166–175. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0140-6736\(13\)62227-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0140-6736(13)62227-8)
5. UK Reproducibility Network Steering Committee (2021). From grassroots to global: A blueprint for building a reproducibility network. *PLOS Biology*, 19(11), e3001461. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pbio.3001461>
6. Global Research Council Responsible Research Assessment Working Group (2026). A responsible research assessment self-assessment tool for funders. <https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.31455505>
7. Hatch, A. & Schmidt, R. (2020). Rethinking Research Assessment: Ideas for Action. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15266830>
8. Benamara, A., Fahal, A., Kowaltowski, A., Trinh, A.-K., Cody, A., Firth, C., Fraser, C., Verónica Jeppesen, C., Youlden, D., Madeira, D., Estillore, G., Morris, J. P., Faure, J.-E., Clarkin, J., Looyen, J., Kiesselbach, M., Ahmad S. Al-Shamsi, M., Aubert bonn, N., Dube, N., ... Li, W. (2024). Dimensions of Responsible Research Assessment (full report and summary). figshare. <https://doi.org/10.6084/M9.FIGSHARE.26064223.V3>



DORA works to advance practical and robust approaches to research and researcher assessment globally.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?


This brief is informed by “A Practical Guide to Implementing Responsible Research Assessment at Research Funding Organizations”, which offers guidance and tips for funders seeking to reform their assessment practices.




[DOWNLOAD THE FULL GUIDE FOR FREE! ↗](#)

CONNECT WITH US

 sfdora.org

 Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA)

 info@sfdora.org

 [@dorassessment.bsky.social](https://twitter.com/dorassessment.bsky.social)

IN COLLABORATION WITH
 GLOBAL
RESEARCH
COUNCIL

SCIENCE
EUROPE
Shaping the future of research



CITE AS

DORA San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment. (2026). Implementing Responsible Research Assessment at RFOs: Informational Briefs from the Practical Guide. DORA. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19615794>